AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A positive photoresist composition formed by dissolving (A) a photosensitive novolak resin comprising an alkali soluble novolak resin wherein some hydrogen atoms within those of all phenolic hydroxyl groups of the alkali soluble novolak resin are substituted by 1,2-naphthoquinone diazide sulfonyl groups, wherein the alkali soluble novolak resin before substitution by 1,2-naphthoquinone diazide sulfonyl groups has been fractionated by weight to produce a degree of dispersion of 2.2 to 2.8, and (C) an alkali soluble acrylate resin, in (B) an organic solvent comprising a propylene glycol alkyl ether acetate.

2. (Previously presented) The positive photoresist composition according to claim 1, wherein the alkali soluble novolak resin before substitution by 1,2-naphthoquinone diazide sulfonyl groups has the following characteristics (1) and (2):

(1) a polystyrene equivalent weight average molecular weight of 1000 to 30000, and

(2) a rate of solution to a 2.38% by weight TMAH (tetra-methyl ammonium hydroxide) aqueous solution at 23°C is 10 t 1000 Å/s,

and wherein the proportion of substitution of the hydrogen atoms within those of all phenolic hydroxyl groups of the alkali soluble novolak resin by 1,2-naphthoquinone diazide sulfonyl group is 2 to 20 mol %.

3. (Original) The positive photoresist composition according to claim 1, wherein the propylene glycol alkyl ether acetate is propylene glycol methyl ether acetate.

4. (Original) The positive photoresist composition according to claim 1, wherein the organic solvent (B) contains a solvent other than the propylene glycol alkyl ether acetate.

5. (Original) The positive photoresist composition according to claim 4, wherein the rate of the propylene glycol alkyl ether acetate in the organic solvent (B) is 50 to 90 weight%.

6. (Original) The positive photoresist composition according to claim 4, wherein the solvent other than the propylene glycol alkyl ether acetate is ethyl lactate.

7. (Currently amended) A resist pattern formation method comprising the steps of coating a positive photoresist composition according any one of Claims 1 to [[5]] 6 on a substrate, prebaking the coated film, selectively exposing the film, and subsequently alkali developing the film.

8. (Previously presented) The photoresist composition according to claim 2, wherein the proportion of substitution of the hydrogen atoms within those of all phenolic hydroxyl groups of the alkali soluble novolak resin by 1,2-naphthoquinone diazide sulfonyl group is 3 to 7 mol %.

9. (Previously presented) The photoresist composition according to claim 9, wherein the proportion of substitution of the hydrogen atoms within those of all phenolic hydroxyl groups of the alkali soluble novolak resin by 1,2-naphthoquinone diazide sulfonyl group is 3 to 5 mol %.

10. (New) The positive photoresist composition according to claim 1, wherein the alkali soluble acrylate resin (C) comprises 30 to 90% by weight of a constitutional unit derived from a polymerizable compound which has an ether linkage and 50 to 2% by weight of a constitutional unit derived from a polymerizable compound which has a carboxyl group.

11. (New) The positive photoresist composition according to claim 1, wherein the molecular weight of the alkali soluble acrylate resin (C) is 10,000 to 800,000.

12. (New) The positive photoresist composition according to claim 1, wherein the amount of the alkali soluble acrylate resin (C) is more than 3 to 20% by weight, based on the photosensitive novolak resin (A).